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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 001598

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/08/2018

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SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: READOUT ON TRILATERAL SUMMIT FROM  
TURKISH EMBASSY

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires a.i. Richard M. Miles. Reasons 1.4 (B)  
) and (D).

11. (C) SUMMARY: According to the Turkish DCM, the November 29 trilateral summit between the Turkmen, Turkish and Azeri presidents covered a range of issues, with no particular breakthroughs. On energy, the Turkish president urged the Turkmen to develop a gas export route to the West, a suggestion that the Turkmen president reportedly "welcomed." Other areas for cooperation were also discussed. The presidents agreed to meet regularly in a trilateral format, with the next meeting to take place in Turkey, probably in the spring. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) On December 8, Turkish Embassy DCM Hakan Cengiz provided poloff with a readout from the November 29 trilateral summit between Turkmenistan President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, Turkish President Abdullah Gul and Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev. Details about the summit had just been reported to the Turkish Embassy by the Turkish MFA in Ankara. The day's meetings began in a bilateral format between the Turkmen and Turkish leaders. The presidents met alone with only an interpreter present for 45 minutes. The Turkmen and Turkish presidents were then joined by Aliyev for a two-hour trilateral meeting, again only the principals and the same, lone interpreter. Lunch followed at the presidential residence Hazar Kosgi ("Caspian Palace") attended only by the presidents without interpreter.

TURKISH PRESIDENT URGED A WESTERN OUTLET FOR TURKMEN GAS

13. (C) Concerning the energy sector, the discussion in both the bilateral and trilateral meetings focused on ways to foster cooperation between the three countries, with Gul urging Berdimuhamedov to diversify gas export routes to include Europe. According to Cengiz, Berdimuhamedov "welcomed" Gul's suggestion. Gul clearly indicated that an alternative pipeline route is essential for Turkmenistan and that the Turkmen should seriously explore the possibility.

AIMING TO EXPAND COOPERATION IN A RANGE OF AREAS

¶4. (C) Talks did not focus exclusively on energy issues. The presidents also discussed how to develop trilateral relations in the economic, education, social and cultural spheres. They welcomed the outcome of Aliyev's official visit to Ashgabat, which took place on the previous day, particularly the bilateral agreements on a railroad ferry across the Caspian and on the normalization of rail and maritime regulations. There was also discussion about the Turkic language speaking countries' presidential summit conferences which have been held regularly, although not annually, since ¶1992. The next such summit will be held in Baku sometime in ¶2009. Turkmenistan has not participated at these Turkic summit conferences for several years. Gul and Aliyev invited Berdimuhamedov to attend the event in Baku and he accepted. Gul and Aliyev also invited Turkmenistan to join the Turkic-speaking countries Parliamentary Assembly, an institution created through the Turkic summit process. Berdimuhamedov said Turkmenistan would "seriously consider joining."

#### TURKMEN-TURKISH COMMISSION TO MEET IN ASHGABAT

¶5. (C) Also discussed during the tete-a-tete between Berdimuhamedov and Gul was the Turkmenistan-Turkey Intergovernmental Commission, the first meeting of which was held in Ankara in April 2008. This mechanism, developed by the Turkmen side, covers every aspect of their bilateral relationship. The second meeting of the commission will take place in March or April 2009 in Ashgabat. The co-chairman

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are Turkmen Deputy Chairman for Textiles and Trade Hojамuhammet Muhammedov and Turkish Minister of Industry and Trade Zefir Caglayan.

#### TRILATERAL SUMMITS WILL CONTINUE

¶6. (C) Cengiz said that all meetings were held in a cordial and warm atmosphere. After lunch at a presidential residence Hazar Kosgi ("Caspian Palace"), the three presidents went for a walk in the garden. Berdimuhamedov then insisted that they take a tour of the grounds in a golf cart, which Gul drove. According to Cengiz, the three presidents have decided to hold such trilateral meetings regularly. The next such meeting will be in Anatolia, then in Baku. No timing was set, but Cengiz suggested the next meeting would probably take place in the spring.

¶7. (C) COMMENT: Given their cultural and linguistic affinities, the three leaders, and countries, have a common platform on which to expand their relations in other spheres. The ease with which the leaders met and communicated and their willingness to continue such gatherings in the future suggests that, with time, the meetings could contribute to resolving some of their seemingly intractable issues. On the question of a Trans-Caspian pipeline, however, it doesn't appear that Gul was able to elicit any more of a commitment than we've heard in past, when Turkmen leaders have expressed interest but done little else. Neither does it appear that Gul was able to effect a significant rapprochement between the Turkmen and Azeri leaders on Caspian delimitation, although the fact that they are at least talking is a step in the right direction. END COMMENT.  
MILES